

A Plea for Auctorum

By CHARLES F. COWAN*

ELIZABETH D. G. BRITT. OMN. REGINA. Absolutely. But I have seen it jocosely remarked that BRITT. is a misspelling because (although spelling in bygone days was pretty cavalier) Britons never really had two T's. Not so, for the universal convention in international Latin was to double the final letter of an abbreviation of a plural. And it is of all the British everywhere that she is Queen; BRITANNIORUM OMNIUM, not just of little Britain.

Similarly, when an author revises earlier work of his own, any errors he made will be corrected with, for brevity, the author citation *auctoris*, abbreviated *auct.* This is short for "of this author" and means "sorry, my mistake". If he is correcting a common general usage he will use the plural *auctorum*, abbreviated *auctt.*, meaning "of authors" (i.e. a widespread error).

These conventions, perfectly clear and very convenient, have been internationally understood for centuries. We ought not to confuse the literature by changing them. If we do not like the conventions we should not use them. The recent trend to ignoring this one, for no stated reason, is much to be deprecated.

A minor difficulty arises when joint authors refer back to their earlier work. Should they use the normal *auct.*, which is theoretically inaccurate, or *auctt.*, which misleads? Surely the former is to be preferred, with a prefatory note in explanation; leaving *auctt.* to serve its normal purpose.

The commonest example of the double-lettered plural is, probably, pp. (= *paginae*, Latin for) pages, closely followed by sq[q] (= [*et*] *sequen[te]s*), for the [several] following page[s]. A description entirely on page 57, say, will be cited as p. 57. If it spills over to the next page it will be pp. 57 sq., as opposed to pp. 57-58 where it occupies most of the following page, and pp. 57, 58 suggesting casual mentions separately on these two pages. Then pp. 57 sqq. signifies a number of pages starting at 57. Incidentally, the abbreviation for plates (an English word) is pls. It is wrong to treat it as Latin and write "pll." since in Latin it would be *tabulae* (*tabb.*)

Surprisingly, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (edn. 4, 1956 reprint) lists in Appendix 1 (p. 1526) the abbreviation for pages as "p.p.". This is quite wrong, and the same work lists pp. correctly in its prefatory table of "Abbreviations used" (p. xvi).

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MELANIC NOTODONTA ANCEPS ESP. (GREAT PROMINENT) IN THE NEW FOREST. — While I was collecting near Brockenhurst on 8th May, 1976, about 80 specimens of this species came to four m.v. lights, one of which was a melanic form. Weather conditions were good with high cloud and very little wind and altogether 69 species of macrolepidoptera came to the lamps. — A. F. J. GARDNER, Willows End, Charlecote, near Warwick.